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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MAY 12, 2009

Summary: Prime Minister Gilani's statement calling for an "all-parties conference on national security" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. His vow to "make militants surrender and establish the (government's) writ" received front page coverage. Reports of a suicide attack on a Frontier Corps camp in Darra Adamkhel killing "at least 11 people" was also highlighted. Also underscored by all newspapers were reports that the "security forces claimed gains in Dir and Malakand and tightened the noose around militants in Swat district." Several major dailies quoted a UN official as claiming that "more than 360,000 people had fled fighting in Malakand Division and that number could double by the end of the year." Reports of the ouster of top U.S. Commander in Afghanistan also received prominent display.

All major dailies highlighted an announcement by the U.S. Embassy that the "U.S. government will contribute \$4.9 million for the immediate relief of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the North West Frontier Province" - some giving it front page coverage. This dovetailed with most major dailies running editorials highlighting the hardships experienced by Internally Displaced Persons pouring out of Swat, Dir and Malakand areas. Emphasizing the urgent need for action, the centrist national daily "The News," noted that the "process of winning over hearts coincides with that of regaining control over tracts of territory and may be the factor that enables the state to retain a grasp of these lands over longer frame of time." Meanwhile, the second-largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," urged President Zardari to "compel the U.S. to bear the entire burden of rehabilitating the IDPs as the military operation in the area is a continuation of a war to protect U.S. interests." Describing Swat as a "litmus test for the state," the prestigious English daily, "Dawn," observed that "if it (the Government of Pakistan) manages to defeat the militants at the cost of destroying the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians, in the long run it is the militants who will win." End Summary.

News Stories

"Gilani Agrees To Convene All-Parties Conference; War To Go On Till Militants' Surrender" "Dawn" (05/12)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told a special session of the National Assembly on Monday that rebels masquerading as religious Taliban in the country's north-west had a 'foreign agenda.' 'However strong the terrorists may be, they cannot face the military. We will make them surrender and establish the government's writ,' Prime Minister said."

"Gilani Calls Donors' Conference For IDP Funding" "Dawn" (05/12)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said Monday his government would host an international donors' conference to drum up funds for an exodus of people displaced by the Swat offensive, Gilani told the Parliament during a debate."

"11 Die In Suicide Attack On FC Camp In Darra" "The News" (05/12)

"At least 11 people were killed and 13 others wounded on Monday in a suicide attack on a camp of the Frontier Constabulary (FC) in Darra Adamkhel, about 25 kilometers south of the provincial metropolis on the Indus Highway. The banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Darra Adamkhel chapter, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying more suicide attacks would be carried out if the military operation was not stopped in Swat and other parts of the country."

"Security Forces Claim Gains In Dir, Malakand" "Dawn" (05/12)

"Several militants were killed or injured on Monday as security forces claimed gains in Dir and Malakand and tightened the noose around militants in Swat district, sources said."

"Over 360,000 Flee Fighting Zones: UN" "The News" (05/12)

"More than 360,000 people have fled fighting between the security forces and Taliban in Malakand Division and that number could double by the end of the year, UN officials warned on Monday."

"Top U.S. General In Afghanistan To Be Replaced" "The News" (05/12)

"U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates has decided to replace the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, U.S. Army General David McKiernan, less than a year after he took over the war effort there, officials said on Monday."

"Troops Heading Towards Mingora From Two Directions: Army Ready For House-To-House Combat: Elite Commandos Dropped For Advance Combat: ISPR" "Daily Times" (05/12)

"We have prepared for house-to-house fighting but if the militants leave Mingora, then we will avoid it,' Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas said. He said forces were heading towards Mingora from two directions. They would link up before assailing the city in force. Officials on Sunday said elite commando troops had been dropped into parts of Mingora for advance combat as the army lifted a curfew to allow thousands of civilians to flee."

"83 Militants Killed In Swat, Dir Lower" "The News" (05/12)

"Security forces claimed to have killed 52 militants in restive Swat Valley during the last 24 hours, while 31 persons, including three civilians were killed in Lower Dir on Monday."

"700 Taliban Killed So Far, Says Malik" "Daily Times" (05/12)

"The security forces have killed 700 Taliban in four days of military operation in Swat, Interior Minister Rehman Malik said on Monday. 'The operation will continue until the last Talib,' Malik said."

"Two Girls' Schools Blown Up In Khyber" "Dawn" (05/12)

"Militants blew up two girls schools in Khyber tribal region on Sunday night. Local militants' spokesman Umar Farooq claimed responsibility for the blast."

"Mehsud Aide Killed In South Waziristan" "Daily Times" (05/12)

"A Taliban commander close to Baitullah Mehsud was among six people found dead from various areas of South Waziristan on Monday."

"U.S. Drones Hover Over NWA" "The News" (05/12)

"Three U.S. spy planes violating the airspace of Pakistan entered Miramshah, headquarters of North Waziristan Agency, and flew over the area for a long time on Monday, eyewitnesses said."

"Army Will Defeat Taliban With People's Support: Zardari" "Dawn"
(05/12)

"President Asif Ali Zardari said in New York on Sunday that during the operation against insurgents efforts would be made to keep collateral damage to the minimum. Speaking at a meeting of overseas Pakistanis, he said the situation called for a lot of courage and at the same time a lot of thinking. With people's support, he said, the army would defeat the insurgency."

"U.S. Trusts Zardari's Government, Backs Anti-Terror Efforts" "The News" (05/12)

"The United States on Monday reaffirmed its full confidence in Pakistan's democratic government led by President Asif Ali Zardari and voiced its support for the key regional country's efforts to get rid of violent extremism as well as strengthen the democratic institutions. The State Department also pledged to help Islamabad address humanitarian situation in the wake of the Taliban insurgency and the Pakistani actions to clear the Swat valley of militants, new spokesman of the State Department Ian Kelly said."

"U.S. Moves To Provide Urgent Humanitarian Assistance To Displaced Pakistanis In NWFP" "Dawn," "Daily Times," "Pakistan Observer," "The Post," "Business Recorder," "Jang," and "Pakistan," (05/12)

"The people of the United States are providing \$4.9 million in immediate emergency assistance to families displaced by the recent conflict in Pakistan's Buner, Dir and Swat, Districts of the North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P.), the U.S. Embassy said in a statement on Monday."

"Taliban To Benefit If Govt. Fails To Help Displaced People" "Daily Times" (05/12)

"Failure to address the needs of hundreds and thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Malakand may overshadow the efforts of the military and work in favor of the Taliban, experts warned on Monday."

"About 80% IDPs Not Interested In Living In Camps" "Daily Times" (05/12)

"Around 80 percent internally displaced persons (IDPs) of the NWFP do not want to live in relief camps, NWFP Relief Commissioner Jamal Amjad has said in an interview with BBC Radio."

"U.S. Working With UN To Help NWFP IDPs: Hillary" "Daily Times" (05/12)

"The United States is working with the United Nations to help hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons of the NWFP, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Monday."

"U.S. Must Help Build Pakistan, Say Top Senators" "The News" (05/12)

"As Pakistani forces battled Taliban in the Swat valley, Democratic Senator Robert Casey of Pennsylvania and Republican Senator Bob Corker of Tennessee, two members of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee urged wide-ranging assistance to help build the key South Asian country that has suffered gravely at the hands of terrorists in recent years."

"Think-Tank Asks U.S. To Stop Drone Attacks" "The News" (05/12)

"A comprehensive report on the current conflict and future of Pakistan, released in Washington on Monday on Capitol Hill by a known independent think-tank, strongly recommends that the current drone attacks in Pakistan should be replaced with a humanitarian aid package for internally displaced people (IDPs) of FATA and the Swat region. The report prepared by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) was released at a congressional briefing sponsored by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson."

"U.S. Urged To Engage Pakistan To Protect Nukes" "Dawn" (05/12)

"The senior U.S. scholars have urged the Obama administration engage Pakistanis to protect their nuclear weapons instead of taking a unilateral action. Michael E. O'Hanlon, a senior fellow at Washington's Brookings Institution, argues that the possibility of a Taliban takeover leads American policy-makers to the inevitable question: 'What could we do if Pakistan collapsed and the security of its roughly 100 nuclear weapons could no longer be vouched for?' the answer, says Mr. O'Hanlon, 'in most scenarios, is that we could only usefully do what the Pakistanis themselves might ask us to do. Unilateral American action would probably be too little, too late.'"

"India To Destroy Pak Economy If Given Direct Land Link To Kabul"
"The News" (05/12)

"The innocuous sounding MoU on the ultimate signing of a Transit Agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan - recently inked between the two countries in Washington - is guaranteed to sire major controversies in the coming days, as it is being perceived as a U.S. dictate to Pakistan to allow a direct land link between Delhi and Kabul."

Editorials/Op-eds

"A National Tragedy," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/12)

"As the fierce military operation continues in Swat and other areas, tens of thousands of people continue to flee the fighting.... There is still a kind of disconnect between the people forced to take shelter where they can and the mainstream of society in our country.... We need action to help displaced people, so that the process of winning over hearts coincides with that of regaining control over tracts of territory and may be the factor that enables the state to retain a grasp of these lands over a longer frame of time."

"America Should Bear This Load," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/12)

"Not only is the number of displaced persons increasing, issues relating to their food shelter, healthcare and other daily requirements are multiplying daily.... President Zardari must try to compel the U.S. to bear the entire burden of rehabilitating the IDPs as the military operation in the area is a continuation of a war to protect U.S. interests. If however, the U.S. is not prepared to bear this burden, our rulers need to ask themselves why they are shedding Pakistani citizens' blood or turning them into refugees for the U.S.?"

"IDPs Need Help - Now," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/12)

"Without a doubt though a grave crisis is unfolding and the state needs to do much, much more to help the IDPs at the earliest, else a humanitarian catastrophe is all but guaranteed. It shouldn't have come to this.... It is not enough to say that Pakistan being a governance-challenged state, the IDPs will simply have to wait, or hope, for the state to get its act together. Failure to improve the situation on the ground quickly could seriously undermine the country's tenuous consensus on the need for the military option against the militants. Swat is a litmus test for the state - if it manages to defeat the militants at the cost of destroying the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians, in the long run it is the militants who will win."

"The Invisible War," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/12)

"Operational considerations notwithstanding; it may be in the interests of both the military and the politicians who issue their orders to be a little more forthcoming than they currently are. A key factor in winning this war is winning the hearts and minds of the general public. Of convincing the common man that the war now

being fought is a just war, is our war and we are fighting it for the greater good. Today, there is guarded support from the common man, but questions are beginning to be asked - where are all these dead Taliban for one?... We do not need to compromise our forces nor our military planners, but we do need to persuade an ever-skeptical public a little better than is currently the case."

"Assistance For Swat Victims - Joint Responsibility Of Nation," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/12)

"The well-off people of the Pakistani society must come forward to help the IDPs of Swat and Dir. The Federal government and the provincial administration should also not hang around in providing humanitarian assistance for these ill-fated people. Pakistani nation had demonstrated an unprecedented zest for the rescue and relief of the victims of October 2005 earthquake. They can repeat their performance yet again as it is the time to demonstrate compassion and care for the fellow citizens."

"Malakand Exodus," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/12)

"The way the camps meant for the IDPs are being run amply indicates a lack of forward thinking. They are invariably short of staff... The government has to fulfill its responsibilities if it wants to avoid a humanitarian tragedy that would lead to two unhappy consequences. First, the extremists could use the government's lapses to recruit hundreds of sympathizers from among the disaffected victims. Second the government will face a severe political backlash if its performance was not considered to be up to the mark."

"Humanitarian Disaster In Making," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/12)

"The country is already hosting millions of Afghan refugees for the last three decades and it is beyond its capacity to manage the problem of IDPs on its own.... Media needs to highlight the issue in right perspective and our missions abroad should sensitize the host Governments and the public opinion to mobilize necessary resources for their welfare."

"A Misplaced Concern," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (05/12)

"The U.S. and the rest of the Western world should understand that Pakistan is passing through a critical period of its times and has to be supported both in political and economic terms. If the U.S. believes that the centre of terrorism is in Pakistan it should go to any length in supporting Pakistan to defeat terrorism rather than put pressure on an already struggling economy to perform a miracle. The military operation in Swat, where thousands of people are streaming out of the conflict zone, proves the point that Pakistan has stretched its resources to its limits in fighting terrorism in every way possible."

"Taliban Are A Problem For The Whole World," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (05/12)

"It has been said that Pakistan is fighting a U.S. war on its soil. However the reality is that the war being fought in Pakistan is a war for the world's survival.... It is fact that even after eight years, U.S. and NATO troops have failed to control the Taliban and most of Afghanistan is still under their control, and President Karzai's government controls only Kabul and its adjoining areas. It is only the Pakistan Army that is successfully eliminating terrorists...."

"The Need For Joint Measures Against Terrorism," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (05/12)

"The government and private sector are doing a lot to help the displaced persons, but because the number is in tens of thousands, we feel that the international institutions and NGOs need to step forward so that the IDPs suffering could be alleviated.... The

operation in Swat is the final blow on extremists - there is no room for failure."

"Propaganda Against Pakistan: U.S. Presence Is The Real Threat, Not Taliban," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/12)

"The terrorists have wreaked havoc in India, Sri Lanka, Sudan and several other countries. A more extremist outfit than the Indian Shiv Sena does not exist in the world; it wants to eliminate or push all Christians and Muslims out of India and is setting mosques and churches on fire. But the U.S. media, U.S. leadership and their Muslim-liberal stooges have neither talked about Hindu extremism nor ever called it a 21st century challenge.... The government of Pakistan must now stop working for a U.S. agenda in exchange for dollars and focus instead on formulating a strategy that protects national interests."

"The Mistake Of Considering Taliban As A Movement For Islam's Supremacy," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (05/12)

"Almost all segments of Pakistani society are uniting to form a consensus against the Taliban and TNSM militants. The idea of calling an Ulema convention on the issue, initiated by the MQM, is now spreading throughout the country.... Speakers at a recent conference in Rawalpindi termed suicide attacks, attacks on security forces and desecration of corpses as un-Islamic.... Those who sympathize with the Taliban and TNSM stance are actually negating the beliefs, rights and wisdom of Pakistan's majority...."

"U.S. Announcement To Continue Bombardment On Afghanistan," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (05/12)

"U.S. National Security Advisor James Jones has said that the aerial attacks will not be halted despite Afghanistan's protest and resentment.... The U.S. rebuff demonstrates that Americans don't care about human lives, particularly the lives of poor Afghan Muslims. In fact, it (U.S.) wants to punish Afghan nation for their unparalleled resistance that thwarted the U.S. designs in this part of the world. But it seems that the U.S. is reaping what it had sown in Afghanistan, and its defeat is now destined."

"IDPs And The Challenges That Await," an op-ed by Mosharraf Zaidi in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/12)

"The IDP crisis is the biggest test of Pakistan's humanity since the October 2005 earthquake. This country's besieged citizens and its civil society have come through for each other before. They must do so once again.... But in mobilizing to respond to the IDP crisis, and in generating an appropriate respond, Pakistanis must remember how we have got here. The only thing that is a guarantee against the terrible tragedies that have haunted this country for the last several years is an effective state. For that, there is no NGO large enough, nor international agency competent enough. In the long run, only Pakistan can help Pakistan."

"Helping the Refugees," an op-ed by Tariq Osman Hyder in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/12)

"The rise of extremism, militancy and the Taliban are a reaction to the war on terror and the occupation of Afghanistan. The resulting disequilibrium of Pakistani society has as its latest consequence the increasing influx of IDPs. If timely and generous international assistance for their relief, rehabilitation, return and development is not provided, these very IDPs, inside and outside camps, will become potential for Taliban recruits. They have little sympathy with the Taliban now. The sustainable success of the counter-insurgency strategy partially hinges on meeting the IDP challenge."

"Blast From The Past," an op-ed by Rasul Bakhsh Rais in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/12)

"This time around, public opinion has turned against the Taliban

both in the insurgency-hit areas and in rest of the country. Another positive sign is that the major political parties are on the same page; there is growing realization in the country that we cannot surrender anything to the armed groups or allow the Taliban to threaten the local population."

Patterson